

July 2023

Office of the Chief Information Officer Update

University kicks off IT capital project planning for FY25 and beyond to prioritize projects and to implement the long-range plan through the advancement of technology: The Office of the CIO invited the university community to make requests for FY25 IT capital project and/or new technology needs, as well as anticipated needs for FY26 and FY27, before August 18. This new annual request and planning lifecycle will enable the Office of the CIO, ITS, and university leadership to appropriately prioritize project and technology requests required to meet the goals of departments and the institution, while also enabling ITS to build and maintain a more comprehensive multi-year capital plan. The university's IT Council (ITC) reviews and approves projects based on centrally awarded funding as well as recommendations from IT Project Steering and other key stakeholders. Projects that are funded and approved through this IT capital project process help the university implement its long-range plan and ensure that the university continues to appropriately advance the use of technology to meet its mission, vision, and goals.

Enhancements that improve quality of address data aim to provide students with improved healthcare service with fewer disruptions: Changes to the Permanent and Current Address blocks in Outsystems were made on July 7 in partnership between ITS, the Registrar, Student Financial Services, and the Student Health Plan to improve the quality of address data and reduce disruptions in healthcare service to students. To address recent challenges with the quality of data, both blocks now only accept English alpha-numeric characters. Also, the Current Address block now operates on the academic year cadence, ensuring that the local address students provide is as accurate as possible. Combined, these changes to the blocks dramatically improve the quality of address data, which allows the university to better serve students.

Updates to the service portal user experience shared by various university departments reduce friction in providing service to students, faculty, and staff: Global navigation and branding elements were added to the Service at Northeastern customer-facing web portal to help the university community better navigate service areas and find the information they need. With an increasing number of Northeastern service areas leveraging ServiceNow to provide support and services to customers, visitors to service.northeastern.edu can now more easily navigate between service portals using a global dropdown menu found at the top of the page. Also, the addition of the Northeastern global header and footer makes the service portals instantly recognizable as an official university resource that the community can trust. ITS, Facilities, SFS, Student Services, and HR currently use service portals, with the Registrar and SSI portals expected to launch later this summer.

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Allowing graduate and CPS students to pay bills using credit cards improves experience and provides millions of dollars in cost savings: Earlier this month, the Enrollment Management, Finance, Treasury, and ITS teams collaborated to introduce a new platform that allows students to make payments by U.S. or international credit card. Previously, when students made payments with a credit card, they incurred a service charge, and the university incurred transaction costs of approximately \$5-6 million. With the new platform launched on July 5, 2023, CIBC, credit card transactions no longer cost Northeastern or its students any service fees. With CIBC, Northeastern can also provide an easier user experience for students paying their bills, while an accessibility remediation report from the university will help CIBC make the product more accessible and inclusive in the future for not just Northeastern students, but the rest of the product's user base. This new solution affects Northeastern graduate students in all colleges, including the School of Law, and both graduate and undergraduate students in the College of Professional Studies.

Modern cloud technologies fuel the revamped Northeastern.edu website experience and provide the infrastructure that allows future innovations: While the approximately 5 million annual site visitors to the university's top-level web domain properties will notice the fresh new design and content that launched the morning of July 20, new and more modern cloud infrastructure is the backbone that supports the site's upgraded look and experience. The new technology, which replaced the legacy infrastructure that was last deployed in 2015, not just allows for the enhanced end-user experience and digital accessibility, but also improves the experience and scalability for the site administrators and editors. As a result, the time to review, edit, and deploy changes has decreased and operational efficiency has increased.

Third-party email delivery solution helps ensure more timely receipt of communications, while better protecting the university community from security issues caused by fake messages: As part of an ongoing project spearheaded by the Office of Information Security, over 85% of the university's third-party email senders have moved to use DKIM, an email authentication method that helps prevent spoofing and spam. This means that when athletics, facilities, advancement, and other university departments send emails through third-party services on behalf of Northeastern, they know their messages will get delivered. At the same time, attackers who try to impersonate Northeastern accounts will go straight to Junk folders, which reduces the chances of our community being tricked by fake messages and phishing attempts that cause security incidents. Of the senders that have transitioned, 96% of their messages are now sent through this method. Once compliance reaches 98%, the university can implement measures to completely reject fake messages rather than marking them as junk.

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Boston campus infrastructure modernization program completes work at ISEC building, bringing quicker and more reliable connectivity in support of science and research: Key milestones have been met in the Technology Infrastructure Improvement Program, including completed upgrades to the Boston campus's core networking infrastructure and the successful cutover of the ISEC building on schedule. As part of the project, teams have installed over 250 new wireless access points to increase connection speed and reliability. This ongoing work targets spaces on the Boston campus to enhance instruction, improve time to science and research, and reduce security-related risk. Similar work and upgrades are expected to be completed in Egan, Snell Engineering, Dana, and West Village H (floors 1-4) by the end of fall 2023.

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